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FM AMEMBASSY BEIJING  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5009  
INFO RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE  
RUEHHE/AMEMBASSY HELSINKI 0764  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 6347  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2841  
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT 1044  
RUEHVI/AMEMBASSY VIENNA 0201  
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 0096  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1314

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 07 BEIJING 008803

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ARR](#) [ARF](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: ARF INTER-SESSIONAL MEETING ON COUNTER TERRORISM  
AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The March 26-28 ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-sessional Meeting on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime focused on discussing "root causes" of terrorism but also gave participants an opportunity to exchange views on recent developments and national experiences in combating terrorism. There was disagreement among participants about the notion of "root causes" of terrorism but the meeting nevertheless acknowledged the importance of soft measures aimed at winning hearts and minds and endorsed giving such efforts greater emphasis in the future work of the ARF. Brunei circulated a draft ARF Statement on "Promoting A People-Centered Approach to Counter Terrorism" for ministers to endorse at the 13th ARF meeting in July (see paragraph 23). U.S. interventions highlighted the continuing role of law enforcement cooperation, including the deportation of illegal aliens; terrorist use of transnational criminal networks; the problem of arms smuggling and financial transfers from Southeast Asia to the Tamil Tigers (LTTE); and the importance of effective information sharing and interagency cooperation. The U.S. urged participants to consider poverty and injustice as examples of the conditions terrorists can exploit rather than as causes of terrorism. Most other speakers, however, espoused the view that factors such as poverty, illiteracy, injustice, foreign occupation, and a lack of respect for Islam cause terrorism. One notable exception was India, which made a forceful and eloquent intervention that flatly rejected the propriety of entering into any discussion of root causes that could elevate the status of terrorism. End summary.

¶2. (U) China and Brunei co-chaired the Fourth ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Inter-sessional Meeting on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (ISM/CTTC) in Beijing April 26-28, 2006. All ARF participants were represented, although East Timor sent only a locally engaged Chinese staff member from its Beijing mission as an observer. Staff members of the ARF Unit of the ASEAN Secretariat, the Southeast Asia Regional Center for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) also took part. State EAP Senior Advisor Steven McGann led the

U.S. delegation, which included representatives from State S/CT, Homeland Security, the U.S. Pacific Command, and Embassy Beijing.

Recent Regional Terrorism Developments-The Opening Session

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13. (SBU) As is typical for ARF events, the meeting opened with a general exchange of views. China's Assistant Foreign Minister Cui Tiankai, one of the meeting co-chairs, summarized the discussion by saying "terrorism knows no borders and thus the region must configure strategies in a corresponding manner." He noted that despite successful efforts to thwart terrorist attacks and to disrupt terrorist cells, terrorist organizations in the region have adopted new methods and are employing increasingly sophisticated technology and techniques that have allowed them to stay in operation and have made them even harder to detect. He highlighted agreement that the region cannot be divided in its efforts to fight terrorism, should mobilize resources and should improve law enforcement cooperation and information sharing. Fighting terrorism should be the common effort of the region regardless of an individual country's development level, race, religion or national polity, he said. During the opening session Brunei, China, the DPRK, India and Laos made presentations as designated lead speakers. Burma, Japan, Malaysia, the United States, Indonesia, Australia and the ROK also made interventions.

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14. (SBU) China's presentation focused heavily on the perceived threat posed by "East Turkistan" terrorist forces. Like other terrorist organizations, the East Turkistan forces are changing their strategies and have adopted the practice of claiming that their activities are resisting ethnic-suppression in order to escape from legal punishment. They are attempting to present themselves as victims. China claimed that East Turkistan forces, such as the East Turkistan Information Center, are using the Internet to build terrorist networks and to incite attacks on Chinese interests.

15. (SBU) The DPRK stated that the main cause for the continued violent cycle of terrorism is "unilateralism and high-handedness that denies other states' political systems, religions and cultures." The DPRK cited the "proliferation of liberty and democracy" to Islamic states in the Middle East as the cause of "indignation" and "outrage" that has resulted in the people protecting their culture with ever stronger resistance. The DPRK argued that pressure, such as sanctions or the use of force against sovereign countries "under the cloak of a war against terrorism" can not be justified and complained that the labels of "terror sponsor states" and "terroristic organizations" are being given to sovereign nations and liberation movement organizations "in order to pursue undesirable purpose."

16. (SBU) India noted the shift in its management of the terrorist situation that has taken place over the last year. New Delhi is now focused on the long-term implications of terrorism because of the growth of "fundamentalism" in the region and extremists' expanding influence in India's hinterland. These terrorist groups are working to undermine the Indian government by attacking important religious sites to foment anger and suspicion between different ethnic and religious groups inside India. The government is

taking a multi-pronged approach based on the democratic and legal process to combat the influence of these extremist groups. India noted the fight against terrorism should not be restricted to the perpetrators of terrorist acts but should also encompass the states that support terrorists.

¶7. (SBU) The Malaysian delegation head, Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs for Policy Planning Zulkifli Adnan, attributed the neutralization of several important JI cells and operatives to increased intelligence sharing with regional counterparts. He suggested that a universally accepted definition of terrorism would contribute to the international effort to fight it and emphasized that counterterrorism efforts should not infringe on the sovereignty or integrity of states and must be based on international law.

¶8. (SBU) The head of the U.S. delegation, EAP Senior Advisor Steven McGann, stated that the United States is increasingly concerned over the collusion between global terrorism and transnational crime. He pointed out that terrorists use the same networks utilized by transnational criminal groups and exploit the overlap between these networks to improve mobility, build support for their terrorist agenda and avoid detection. McGann noted that regional states face a difficult challenge in thwarting these activities. He suggested that ARF members enhance their awareness of maritime areas and increase the operational presence of authorities to deter terrorist and transnational crime groups. McGann used the stymied peace process in Sri Lanka as an example of the intersection of terrorists and transnational crime groups. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's (LTTE) war-making capability is supported by a network of arms smuggling

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and financial transfers, much of it located in the Southeast Asia region. McGann stated that the United States is seeking ARF member cooperation to help identify ways to shut down LTTE arms procurement in Southeast Asia.

¶9. (U) The Chinese-drafted Co-chairs' Summary Report of the meeting highlighted agreement on the continuing threat that terrorism poses to regional peace and stability, despite international efforts. It observed that terrorists have reconfigured into smaller cells that are difficult to detect. The Report says that members of different terrorist groups are working together through unstructured networks of personal relationships and that they are taking increasing advantage of computer networks and the Internet to develop networks, propagate extremist views, and coordinate activities.

"Root Causes"

¶10. (SBU) The co-chairs selected "Possible Root Causes" of terrorism as a discussion topic and invited presentations from Indonesia, Pakistan, Russia, and SEARCCT. In introducing this agenda item, the co-chair from Brunei, Deputy Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs Hajah Maimunah DP Elias, told participants that the "hearts and minds" approach is more effective than a coercive approach. After reaffirming that all states must have zero tolerance for terrorism, she discussed poverty, injustice and ignorance as factors that should be addressed as part of the struggle against terrorism.

¶11. (SBU) Pakistan identified foreign occupation, defamation of religions and cultures, poverty,

illiteracy, and socio-economic inequalities as the most important root causes, and asserted that "no counter terrorism strategy can be effective unless causes and conditions that breed, encourage, and contribute to terrorism are objectively identified and addressed." "Without a war on political injustice and poverty, terrorism cannot be defeated." Pakistan also called for a universally accepted definition of terrorism. These themes were echoed in Indonesia's presentation. The Indonesian representative noted that behind our success in neutralizing terrorist actors there may be the emergence of new actors and perpetrators of terrorism. For this reason, we must also focus on root causes such as poverty, intolerance, and injustice. Russia focused on the need to limit conflicts to prevent them from becoming "forges of terrorists" and identified Iraq as the current "testing ground" and "production site" of terrorists. The Russian presentation also urged that countries address national humiliation and "the grave social and economic conditions, the sense of despair, and unsettled social conflicts, that nourish the ranks of terrorists." They also recommended that regional fora like ASEAN, ARF, APEC & the SCO conduct combined CT expert meetings to share lessons & better coordinate regional CT efforts.

¶12. (SBU) The U.S. responded to these presentations by emphasizing that poverty, inequality, and illiteracy don't cause terrorism; they are conditions terrorists exploit. Law enforcement and military actions alone are not enough. Countries must work together to ameliorate these exploitable conditions.

¶13. (SBU) India made a forceful intervention that underlined the consensus that violence and terrorism have no place in a civilized society. Observing that the rationalizations advanced by advocates of "root causes" cannot absolve terrorists, the Indian representative said that terrorism should be defined with reference to the act and not by a description of

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the perpetrator of the act. In this light, terrorists and freedom fighters are indistinguishable. Terrorism should not, he said, be elevated in stature by linking it to "so called" root causes. Those who commit acts of terrorism violate the most basic human right--the right to life. "No root cause can justify the massacres of innocent civilians. The right to life of innocent people cannot be superseded by a right to kill them to redress some real or imagined historical wrong."

¶14. (U) The Co-chairs' Summary Report did not indicate any agreement on the question of root causes but instead related that "many participants" were of the view that root causes of terrorism are both varied and multifaceted and noted that "a range of conditions in society may create an environment for terrorism to thrive." The Report says, "Many participants stressed that it was essential to address both the symptoms and root causes of terrorism. Successfully eliminating terrorism requires a balanced and comprehensive approach that includes employing political, economic, legal, and other measures, including measures aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the people."

Combating Terrorism  
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¶15. (U) A number of participants, including the United States, were invited to make presentations on their strategies and measures to combat regional terrorism. The SCO was also invited to present under this agenda item.

¶16. (SBU) Department of Homeland Security Director of Strategic Plans Eric Fagerholm gave the U.S. presentation on "Law Enforcement as a Tool Against Terrorism." Fagerholm developed the theme of partnership and cooperation in law enforcement, in particular with regard to border control, and told the meeting "law enforcement has a critical role to play in counter terrorism." Noting that illegal migration creates vulnerabilities that terrorists can exploit, he outlined the Secure Border Initiative, as well as new and on-going port and cargo security measures and emphasized the importance of securing ARF participants' cooperation in facilitating the movement of their citizens back home when they are being removed from the U.S. as illegal immigrants. He suggested that countries should treat the movement of terrorists with the same seriousness that they now treat the flow of terrorist financing.

¶17. (SBU) A representative of the SCO briefed the meeting on his organization's background and on its strategy and measures in combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism. Among the principles of the SCO strategy he listed were; respect for sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity; non-aggression and non-interference in internal affairs; no double standards; cooperation, economic growth and development, and human rights and fundamental freedoms. Measures being taken by the organization include, combating terrorist financing, creating a register of suspected terrorists, and developing measures to prevent terrorist access to WMD and radioactive or hazardous materials. In discussion following the presentation, Russia intervened to suggest that ARF act as an umbrella organization for combining the counter-terrorism efforts and various regional organizations such as APEC and the SCO and proposed a combined meeting of counter terrorism experts from ARF and SCO countries.

¶18. (SBU) Several participants also briefed the meeting on their counter terrorism emergency response plans. Among these, the Philippines' presentation was noteworthy for the extent to which it echoed themes

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developed through sustained U.S. engagement with the Philippines' government, armed forces and police. General Marlu Quevedo, assistant national anti-terrorism coordinator, emphasized the importance of interagency effort, articulated the concept of "supporting" and "supported" organizations, and outlined plans for a more effective and efficient anti-terrorism organization under the national security advisor.

¶19. (SBU) Participants were also invited to discuss information sharing. Malaysia explained that its emphasis on addressing the root causes of terrorism does not diminish the importance of law enforcement efforts, which are enhanced through information sharing. Bilateral agency-to-agency contact has been the most effective way of sharing information but in the future countries will have to find ways to share information on a wider scale, which may require treaties or agreements. Information exchange should be fair and equal; one country cannot invoke bureaucratic obstacles to sharing information while urging other countries to disregard their own procedures. The U.S. intervention, made by USPACOM's Joint Inter-Agency Coordinating Group for Combating Terrorism (JIACG/CT) Director, Captain Rodger Welch, noted the need for a supporting policy framework and legal agreements for information sharing both across borders and between agencies domestically and offered



the formation of the Department of Homeland Security, The Joint Inter-Agency Task Force-West (JIATF-W) and his own organization as U.S. examples of institutional arrangements designed to promote information sharing and interagency cooperation. He also proposed an inventory of existing information sharing arrangements before initiating efforts to construct new international arrangements.

¶20. (SBU) Papua New Guinea's Ambassador to China took the floor during this session, for the first and only time during the meeting, to discuss the situation in the Solomon Islands. The ambassador said that the recent rioting in Honiara demonstrated how civil strife in small vulnerable states can be exploited by outside parties, which represents a new security challenge. He condemned the targeting of ethnic Chinese residents of the city and said they were scapegoats for the indigenous peoples' frustration with the way in which they had been marginalized by outside actors' exploitation of their country's natural resources and manipulation of its politics.

#### Institutional Issues

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¶21. (SBU) Participants agreed to develop action plans to implement the recommendations of previous ARF counter terrorism statements. They acknowledged the importance of soft measures aimed at winning hearts and minds and endorsed giving such efforts greater emphasis in the future work of the ARF. Participants also agreed that the ISM on CTTC should have a greater role in coordinating ARF counterterrorism efforts. (The ISM/CTTC does not now have a coordinating role and terrorism related ARF events are proposed and considered only in the context of the ARF's confidence building efforts. For example, as an outgrowth of two seminars on Cyber Security and Cyber Terrorism co-chaired by the ROK and the Philippines as ARF confidence building measures, the Philippines drafted a Ministerial Statement on "Terrorist Misuse of Cyber Space" that it circulated through the Inter-sessional Support Group meeting process. Neither this draft statement nor the seminars they grew out of were ever considered by the ISM/CTTC, although Russia argued that they should have been.) Singapore and Japan offered to co-chair a 5th ISM/CTTC on the theme of inter-faith dialog in Tokyo in the spring of 2007.

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#### Draft Ministerial Statement

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¶22. (SBU) At the close of the meeting, Brunei tabled, without discussion, a draft ARF Statement on "Promoting A People-Centered approach to Counter Terrorism" for ministers' approval at the 13th ARF meeting in July. Prior to tabling this document, the Brunei delegation informally solicited U.S. input to their draft, which was largely reflected in the document they put forward. The statement will be discussed at the ARF Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) in Malaysia on May 19. Russia and the EU both voiced concern that there is insufficient time to fully consider this statement before the SOM, and Russia suggested that Brunei hold its draft until next year. Brunei, however, expressed its intention to press ahead with its proposed Statement.

BEGIN TEXT OF DRAFT STATEMENT:

ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Statement on Promoting a People-Centered Approach to Counterterrorism

The Chairman of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), on behalf of the participating states and organizations, issues the following statement:

RECOGNIZING THAT:

The majority of people in the region are peace-loving.

Terrorism constitutes a serious threat to international peace, stability and security.

Any measures to counter terrorism in all its forms and manifestations should be consistent with the Charter of the United Nations (UN), international law, United Nations Security Council Resolutions and UN Conventions and Protocols related to counterterrorism.

Terrorism should not be associated with any religion, culture, race or nationality.

Successfully eliminating terrorism requires a comprehensive approach that includes addressing the underlying causes of terrorism without acknowledging these as justifications for terrorist and/or criminal activities.

Supporting initiatives currently undertaken by regional and international organizations on counterterrorism, including efforts to promote respect, understanding and tolerance among people of all religions, beliefs and cultures, forms an essential part of the overall ARF efforts to counter terrorism.

Strong cooperation exists within the ARF framework in the fight against international terrorism and desiring to undertake further measures to prevent, disrupt, combat and respond to terrorism.

It is vitally important to engage all levels of society including the academia, media, non-governmental organizations, community groups and other relevant institutions.

COMMITTED TO:

Implement the principles laid out in this Statement, in accordance with their respective domestic laws and their specific circumstances, with the view to the full implementation of any or all of the following measures:

1. Identifying counterterrorism strategies and

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measures that promote greater tolerance and understanding, as well as those aimed at winning the "hearts and minds" of the people in order to ensure their effectiveness.

2. Inculcating public awareness on the threat of terrorism to their safety and well-being.

3. Developing initiatives and programs to promote public participation on counterterrorism measures by encouraging the constructive roles of the academia, media, non-governmental organizations, community groups and other relevant institutions.

4. Exploring possible ways and means of sharing information and best practices on emergency response mechanisms.

5. Identifying ways to enhance partnerships with international organizations, regional fora and other relevant institutions to promote the above measures in

the effort to counter terrorism.

¶6. Reviewing the progress of these and other efforts to further strengthen cooperation to counter terrorism and other related transnational crimes.

END TEXT OF DRAFT STATEMENT

¶23. (SBU) In the preamble, in the sentence beginning "Successfully eliminating terrorism..." the U.S. has proposed that "underlying causes of terrorism" be replaced by "conditions exploited by terrorists." This draft statement will be discussed at the ARF Senior officials meeting in Malaysia on May 19. POC for the draft statement is EAP/RSP: Joe Murphy (02-647-2722).

¶24. (U) The U.S. delegation cleared this cable.  
RANDT